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ABSTRACT

"Man and His Creative Awareness," developed by the Institute for Services to Education (ISE) in conjunction with the Thirteen-College Curriculum Program (TCCP) is a course that deals with the many aspects of human creativity: music, the visual arts, literature, poetry, drama, architecture, photography, and the film. The ISE-TCCP approach to humanities is to include not only the major works of western civilization, but to explore also the art, music, drama, and folklore in the immediate environment of the students and the creativity in some nonwestern societies, particularly Africa. The student not only assesses the works of others but also experiments in his own expression in various media. After describing the scope of the course in Part I, this document proceeds in Part II to describe the first experience with the new course at Bishop College. The author includes the final exam of the course in the document, including three hypothetical situations that demanded the students use their knowledge in a new and creative way. The subject matter used, the projects done, the class discussions held, are all means to the desired end of creating in the student a critical judgment of, and enthusiasm for, the creative genius of mankind. (Author/PG)

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The answer is very unsymmetrical and unfamiliar. The question immediately arises, "How can one small piece of putty destroy such a beautifully simple and symmetrical relation? Are the laws of physics so capricious?" These are questions that we are able to answer as we learn to put the laws of physics in a more general form. Students are usually temporarily

pacified with the answer, "We will learn that the symmetry and simplicity of behavior is still present; we only have to learn what point of view we need to adopt in order to see it. In this case we need to learn to count another quantity to recognize the more general conservation law, of which our derived law is a special case."

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Creative Awareness in Humanities

Part 1. Scope of Course

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"Man and His Creative Awareness," developed by the Institute for Services to Education in conjunction with the Thirteen-College Curriculum Program, is a course which deals with the many aspects of human creativity: music, the visual arts, literature, poetry, drama, architecture, photography, and the film. Traditionally, Humanities courses have dealt almost entirely with Western Civilization and the "Great Works" of that tradition. Certainly this heritage is important to the course, but the ISE- TCCP approach to Humanities is to include not only the major works of Western Civilization, but to explore also the art, music, drama, and folklore in the immediate environment of the students, the contemporary status of all the arts in this country, and the creativity in some non-Western societies, particularly Africa. Emphasis is on the creative process as well as the resultant works of art. The student not only assesses the works

of others, but also experiments in his own expression in various media. Thus the student has an opportunity to feel what an artist experiences in creating a painting, writing a play, poem or short story, or making a movie or a series of slides.

Materials and equipment needed to work in each of these areas are made available. The student is free to work with paints, clay, or paper, movie or still cameras, or tape recorders. The projects are presented in class with the student explaining the process that he went through to complete his project. Students are involved as much as possible in the input in class. They are challenged to do research in areas and to present their results in class and lead discussions about their findings and conclusions.

The subject matter covered is a result of the concerns of both the students and the instructors. It is important that a wide range of subjects be explored—visual arts, drama, literature, music—so that an understanding can be gained of how each one satisfies man's creative urges. These are studied in several cultural areas and historical periods in order to enhance the students' understanding of both the development of art and its interrelationships with culture and society.

The subject matter used, the projects done, the class discussions held, are all means to the desired end of creating in the student a critical judgement of, and enthusiasm for, the creative genius of mankind. It is hoped that this will challenge him to go beyond the classroom with a developed ability to interpret in a sophisticated manner this creativity. And at the same time, this critical judgement should help him to understand and improve his own expression in writing and speaking, as well as perhaps help him to discover in himself a talent in some other form of expression.

Part 2. First Semester 1970-71 School Year

by Sara Hollis

The conference at Pine Manor during the summer preceeding this fall semester was most exciting to this teacher, new to the program and new to Bishop. Various experts in areas such as music, African literature, and drama worked with the assembled Humanities teachers, as well as technicians in various media such as tape recorders, video-tape machines, paper and paints (me), and staging techniques.

The Humanities sessions were a model for what was hoped would be the teaching philosophy of the teachers when they returned to their own classrooms. The emphasis was on activities and projects with the only real lecturing being in the areas of music (by Roger Dickerson) and African writing (by Keorapetse Kgotsile). The assembled teachers assumed the role of students and presented projects based on the play *El Haj Malik* and independent projects in such areas as photography and film.

In September, the BB and DD sections of ISE-TCCP Humanities began the semester by filling out a questionnaire asking them a number of questions about their backgrounds in relation to the subject area of humanities. They were asked not only about experiences with music, drama, museums, etc., but also about their own talent and equipment such as tape recorders, cameras, or musical instruments.

In the next session, they were presented with a supply of paint and mural sized pieces of paper, and asked to first of all think what they felt they wanted to express and then try to put it on paper for others to see.

This began a discussion of many related areas that lasted for the next several class periods, because when challenged to express themselves in paint, the students combined color and form with a lot of writing. So instead of a mural in the form of a painting, the result of each group was predominantly slogan writing. Part of this was due to limited backgrounds in art and greater familiarity with written expression. To try to separate the two out, I asked the students to write down in prose what they were trying to express and to bring to class examples of art and photography which expressed the same ideas visually. Then I brought in a number of slides of paintings by black artists and we discussed their work. Then Ruth Tunstall, local black artist, came in and showed her work and slides and her Masters Show and discussed her views and experiences with art. Finally we painted again. This time no writing was allowed and only visual forms were allowed. For those students who wished to continue on with painting and other art forms after the class went on to another area of expression, the Humanities Art Workshop was formed and has been held on every Tuesday evening. Students and faculty members from TCCP and the college at large attend the workshop.

At the end of the unit on visual expression, paintings by European artists were shown and discussed in relation to the theme of protest, which seemed to be the dominant theme in the works by black American artists. This unit is typical of the pattern attempted in all the units of the semester. First, the student is involved personally, through his own expression and situation. Next, this is expanded to artists, writers, etc. who are working with the same themes, such as other black artists, and then artists from other backgrounds whose work or themes are related.

Expanding on the theme of the artist and his relationship to his environment and his work, we next began a unit on autobiography. The students were asked to choose an autobiography written by a creative person they admired and to prepare to discuss it with the class. Those who chose to read the same books reported together as panels. Although allowed to choose from anything in the library, every student but one chose an autobiography by somebody black. As individual books were discussed, lively discussions ensued and gradually a pattern emerged that made apparent the great similarity among the lives and struggles of talented blacks trying to succeed in creative fields in this country. Some of the authors of these autobiographies were writers such as James Baldwin and Eldridge Cleaver, actors such as Sidney Poitier and Sammy Davis Jr., singers such as Ethel Waters, and other talented figures from today and yesterday such as Gordon Parks, Dick Gregory, Claude Brown, Mary Church Terrell, Frederick Douglass, and W.E.B. Du Bois.

It has been said of *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* that it is almost a summation of all the autobiographies of blacks seeking to become successful in this country. While this might be an exaggeration, the students felt upon reading *El Haj Malik*, Davidson's recent play based on *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, that it did indeed encompass much that they had found in the autobiographies they had read. The play lent itself to several kinds of discussion; the different impact of drama from prose, the use of various kinds of language to portray life styles, and the way that a hero figure is shown to overcome many obstacles and to experience various revelations.

During the unit on autobiography, the students were asked to prepare creative projects to be presented and discussed in class. Each student was to choose a project in some medium that would be interesting to him, and to be prepared to discuss process and to field questions from the class. Projects included creative dance, African music, original poetry read to a background of music or with slides, original plays written and performed by members of the class, movies taken by students, slides taken by class members on various subjects, paintings done and explained by the artists. On the whole, the projects were very well done. The plays and some of the poetry were repeated in the evening so that friends of the class members could attend. The class enjoyed the opportunity to do creative projects and asked that they be given a similar assignment for the Spring semester.

At the end of the semester, in conjunction with the ISE-TCCP philosophy class taught by Louis Garbarino

to roughly the same group of students (BB, DD), a unit on Africa was begun. While the focus of the discussions differed somewhat between the philosophy and humanities sections, much material used was related to both areas. The Senegalese film *Mandabi* was shown in the evening. In Humanities we read a number of selections from the anthology *African Writing Today*, which includes short stories, poems, and excerpts from novels by a cross section of the outstanding writers from Africa. Slides were shown of African Art and I showed a series of slides from the area of Africa I lived in while teaching there with the Peace Corps. We also listened to African music of various types. More or less "pure" tribal music recorded by Alan Merriam, outstanding musicologist, was contrasted with Western influenced styles such as that on the album *Missa Luba*, also recorded in Congo and such popular music as the Highlife from Nigeria and Ghana. At the very end of the semester, Mr. Samuel Toye, from our own History department came in and spent an afternoon with the combined BB, DD classes discussing African traditional culture, its response to change and to Western influence, and answering many questions from the assembled students.

The African unit will be continued into the first three weeks of the Spring semester. The students will be asked to read and discuss a novel by an African author and hopefully will meet some of the Africans on our campus to raise questions inspired by their reading.

The final exam for the first semester was an attempt on my part to evaluate how much that will be useful by them in the future was absorbed by the students. They were given a choice of three hypothetical problems to solve. Here is the final as I gave it.

FINAL EXAM

"This exam is designed to determine both how much you have learned in class this semester, as well as what you have begun to notice, read, etc. outside of class that relates to humanities, and also, how prepared you are to use these materials if you were called upon to do so. I hope you enjoy working on it and find it a valuable reference later in case any of the hypothetical cases indeed happen to you.

"Please choose ONE of the following hypothetical cases and do your research during the week. You are to write your actual answer during our final exam time. You may include any of your research materials (bibliographies, pictures, articles, notes) in the back. I will have a stapler available for you.

"*Hypothetical situation No. 1:* You have been asked to teach a summer session course at a big university. The course will run 8 weeks. The subject of the course is "The Creative Genius of Blacks" and is to cover art, music, literature, poetry, etc. produced by Africans and Afro-Americans. You are given a free hand to set up the course any way that you wish and have a liberal budget to work with.

"Your question is: Please indicate HOW you would structure the course, WHAT materials you would

use, WHAT you wish the students to do and in each case WHY you would do it the way you plan to. Remember, you can do almost anything you wish because you have a good budget and freedom of teaching style. Discuss first the background of your students, in terms of age, class, color (since you are writing this, you can imagine any kind of class you want to work with). Then perhaps give the aims of the course, materials, class projects, lectures, whatever, and then the rationale for it all.

"A suggestion: You have a large faculty here, a big library and a lot of friends. Pick everybody's brains including mine. Find out where books, records, supplies, and equipment would be available to you. You have a whole week to work on this. You can probably do more research on this working in groups, but your exam paper, written during the exam time, must be written individually. One student, one paper.

"*Hypothetical situation No. 2:* You have just been hired by Super-Soul T.V. Channel WSOL. It is a national T.V. station staffed, supported, and run entirely by blacks. Your job is to set up a year's program on the arts (in the broadest sense). You have a lot of money to work with. You can bring in any number of guests, films, works of art, musicians, . . . anything. It is for you to decide how you want to structure the program. Decide WHOSE art you will cover (black Americans, and/or Africans, Europeans, Orientals, Americans generally? It is up to you). WHAT will be the format of the show (how long, how structured, what time of the day and week) and specifically what artists, writers, playwrights, musicians, poets, would you feature. Would you be on the show in any capacity, or in the background. Think, think. Maybe someday you really might be offered an opportunity to do this. Are you ready?

"*Hypothetical situation No. 3:* You are an advanced scholar doing research in the area of Black Studies. You are trying to trace the roots of Black Culture in America. To do this you feel you must do extensive research on Africa, and what is truly African; Europe, and what is truly European; and then how America generally has been influenced by both. Finally you wish to establish what specifically have been the influences of these other cultures on Black American Culture and then how much is original and goes beyond any influences. Discuss areas such as the arts, music, literature (oral or written), uses of language, architecture, dance, as it occurs in Africa, Europe, American Culture generally. Where as a scholar do you go to trace these? What books are available to you? Movies? Records? Who would you consult? What kinds of things would you want to ask them?

"If you choose this question to work on: Write out some kind of a plan for your research. Include your purpose (roughly stated above), what resources you would use (in detail), and what you would expect to find as hypothetical conclusions. I will particularly notice how thoroughly you document the books, movies, records, and people available to you in doing your research. Ask teachers if they have any bibliographies that would help you. Or catalogues of movies, tapes, slides, etc. This is a hard question, but ultimately

probably the most valuable if you can do a good job of it.

"Please take these questions seriously. They will be the best indication to me of how much you have gotten out of our work this semester and how prepared we all are, including me, to continue our work in these areas next semester. Look over question number three. I included it because I would hope that by May we will have some solid answers for it, based on what we have done this semester and will be doing next semester."

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